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Figure 12-10.—Leading lines.



Figure 12-11.—Framing the point of interest using a cargo net.

Foreground and Background

The area in front of and behind a subject can be used to develop depth in a photograph. For example, when you place objects relevant to the subject in the foreground, the foreground and the subject (in the middle ground) both become elements of interest in the photograph.

However, you should avoid a busy foreground or background. Too many details or unattractive components will detract from the main subject. For instance, a flagpole or a sword in the command insignia appearing to grow out of someone's head obviously harms the effect of the photograph.

The foreground or background also can be blurred intentionally by camera settings and selective focusing to draw attention to the subject.

Framing

Another method of confining attention to the point of interest is by framing it with foreground objects (fig.

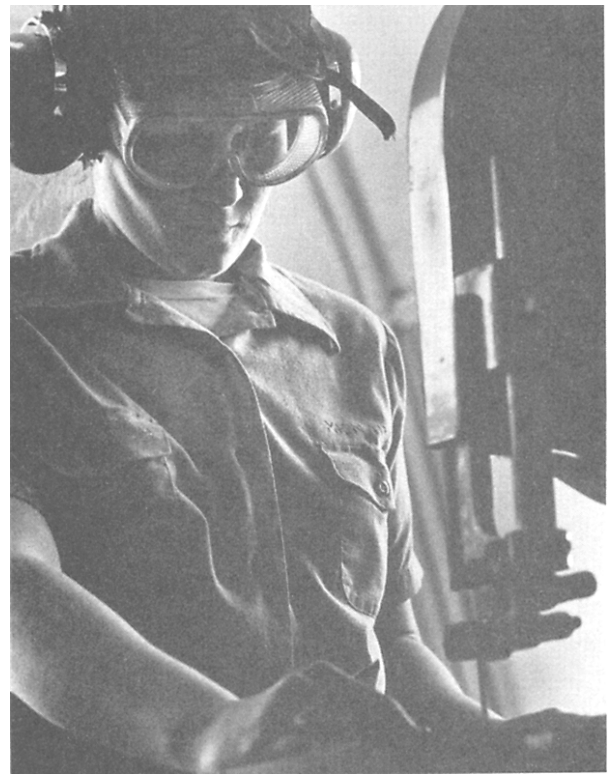


Figure 12-12.—Informal working portrait shot from a low angle.

12-11). The object could be an arch, a window, a tree limb or even an arm or leg.

Camera Angle

The camera angle also is very important in good composition. It can help you place emphasis where you want it. Angles can be used to create the unusual when the scene is commonplace. Using a high, low, left or right angle relative to your subject can produce an entirely new effect. Avoid shooting everything from the common eye level. This is the same view seen by your viewer all day long. Walk around the subject and determine which viewpoint will have the most impact or the most pleasing effect.

When the camera is placed above the level of the subject, it creates a distant and detached view. Shooting from a low angle produces a dramatic and a statuesque effect (fig. 12-12). When the camera is aimed at a 45-degree angle toward the subject, it lends depth to the subject and gives the best identification. On the other hand, a frontal view creates a flat appearance and will not last very long in the viewer's mind.

Lighting

Lighting is one of the important creative elements of composition. When you control the light and direct it where it is wanted, minor objects or distracting elements in the scene can be subdued and thereby give more prominence to the main point of interest. The type of lighting best suited for a subject depends on the type of subject and the purpose of the photograph. If maximum detail is desired in the shadows, the illumination should be soft and diffused. Sidelighting is most effective in showing texture. However, light falling diagonally on the subject from above and to one side of the camera is the most natural form of illumination. We are accustomed to seeing most subjects under this condition in which the shadows are cast off to one side and slanted away from us, creating the greatest apparent depth and roundness in the subject.

Shadows are the key to apparent depth in a photograph. Without shadows the subject is without form, curvature or texture, appearing flat and lifeless. This does not mean that shadows should be harsh and black to achieve these effects. They may be soft, yet of sufficient density to show the most delicate roundness of form. As a general rule, harsh black shadows are undesirable in a photograph due to the complete loss of detail in them. From a compositional standpoint however, black shadows can be very useful in balancing a scene and directing attention to the point of interest. While viewing the scene from various angles to select the best camera position, note the effects of illumination. In all probability, the most complimentary lighting on an outdoor subject occurs only during one short period of the day. For this reason, time your photograph to take advantage of the most suitable available light or plan to create your own illumination with auxiliary lights.

Silhouetting

Silhouetting is when a subject is backlit and then underexposed. A silhouetted subject gives overall strength to a composition and isolates the subject through contrast of the dark foreground against the lighter background (fig. 12- 13).

COMPOSITIONAL LINES

The formation of lines in a composition is unavoidable. For example, lines are formed by the



Figure 12-13.—Silhouetted subject.

horizon, a person's limbs, the side of a ship, a fence or a winding road. These lines — vertical, horizontal, diagonal or curved — lend their own element of emphasis to a composition.

Vertical lines formed by elements in composition suggest strength and dignity (a sentry at attention), while horizontal lines suggest tranquility and rest (a ship on the horizon at sunset). The diagonal line suggests action (climbing aircraft) and a variety of lines indicates activity. A feeling of grace and beauty is conveyed to the viewer by the use of curvaceous lines, such as those used in glamour and fashion photography.

BALANCE

A good composition should have balance. In other words, your viewer should not get the uneasy feeling that the elements may come tumbling out of your composition.

A balanced composition gives a feeling of harmony to the whole setting. Elements of balance are placed in opposing sections of a photograph in such a manner that each section appears to have an equal amount of weight